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## **Public Health Press Release**

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For: Immediate Release  
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Contact: Annemarie Beardsworth, 222-3998

### **H1N1 (Swine) Flu Cases Escalate In RI**

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) is seeing that H1N1 (Swine) flu continues to spread both locally and nationally. In Rhode Island, HEALTH has seen an increase in sporadic cases and outbreak clusters throughout the state, including in schools. As of 11 a.m., June 9, there are 39 confirmed positive cases in RI, doubling the case count in less than a week. Rhode Island and national surveillance data indicate increased infections in children, increased infections in individuals with chronic medical conditions, and a generally higher hospitalization rate of those infected. Although most illness in Rhode Island has been mild, compared to seasonal influenza, there is an increase in the number of hospitalizations. Ten of the Rhode Islanders with swine flu have been hospitalized.

"As we expected and planned, we are now seeing an increase in confirmed cases of swine flu in the state," said Director of Health David R. Gifford, MD, MPH. "We are seeing more cases in schools, more hospitalizations and more individuals who have underlying medical conditions being effected. Everyone needs to continue to be vigilant about handwashing, coughing and sneezing into elbows and staying home if they are sick. We expect that this will likely continue throughout the summer and into the fall."

In April, HEALTH strengthened its surveillance systems to monitor suspected and confirmed cases of H1N1 influenza and influenza-like illness (ILI) symptoms (fever plus cough or sore throat) at physician sentinel sites, hospitals, emergency rooms, college and university health centers and in all schools (public, private and parochial). This has helped us detect the increase in cases.

#### **To limit the spread of any illness, HEALTH strongly recommends:**

- Wash hands frequently with soap and warm water. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand gel.
- Sneeze and cough into your elbow.
- If you are sick, call your doctor and stay home from work, school or daycare for 7 days after symptoms start or at least 24 hours after symptoms stop, whichever is longer.
- If you or someone you know is pregnant has flu-like illness (fever plus cough or sore throat), she should call her healthcare provider immediately.

For regularly updated information, visit <http://www.health.ri.gov> or call 401-222-8022 (Monday - Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.) After hours, please leave a message and calls will be returned the next business day.

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